

Michigan Wellhead Protection Program Success Stories



The following case studies highlight success stories in the Michigan Wellhead Protection Program. This program assists local communities utilizing groundwater for their municipal drinking water supply systems in protecting their water source. A WHPP minimizes the potential for contamination by identifying and protecting the area that contributes water to municipal water supply wells and avoids costly groundwater clean-ups. Wellhead protection is voluntary and implemented at the local level through the coordination of activities by local, county, regional, and state agencies.

If your community has a Wellhead Protection success story to share, please contact Sue Grinwis at 517-241-1339, or by e-mail at grinwiss@michigan.gov.

City of Marshall

City reaches out to community about the importance of groundwater protection.

Background:

Location: City of Marshall, Calhoun County, MI

Water Supply: Ground Water, 4 production wells

Source Water Assessment: High susceptibility

Description of Project Action:

The team collaborated to develop a plan for outreach programming for their community. Initial target audiences included individuals representing schools, youth groups, service clubs, community organizations and municipal government. Wellhead protection materials were presented to a variety of audiences at diverse events, including:

- Schools
- Water festivals
- Earth Day events
- 4-H Conservations Days
- Sheriff's Department Outdoor Days
- Rotary Club
- Exchange Club
- Township meetings
- Environmental Expo
- River Clean Up events,
- Calhoun County Fair
- Science Fairs
- Girl Scouts
- Garden Clubs

A variety of tools were used to spread the groundwater protection message, including brochures, groundwater models, Wellhead Protection Area signage, posters, newspapers, community newsletters, lectures, slide shows and promotional items such as magnets, pens and water bottles.

Results:

Overall the team believes the citizens of Marshall are more informed about their potential impact on water quality and their role in wellhead protection. Water resource protection and conservation has become a priority in the community. The team plans to continue to make WHP presentations, targeting a new audience each year, as well as identify new outreach methods, such as television and radio advertising.

Lessons Learned:

The Marshall WHP team believes that the general population doesn't seem to care about water resources protection only because they don't understand the issues. Team members were surprised to learn how many people didn't know the source of their drinking water, how a septic tank works, how water moves in a watershed, or how they impact water resources. The team has found it interesting and exciting to see the empowerment in their educational activities.

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Plainfield Charter Township
City increases involvement in groundwater protection activities.

Background:

Location: Plainfield Charter Township, Kent County, MI

Water Supply: Ground Water, 16 production wells

Source Water Assessment: High susceptibility

Description of Project Action:

In 2006 the team hosted their 2nd Annual Wellhead Water Festival at an area park. The day-long event included 15 volunteers, four games, two arts and crafts activities, refreshments and an information station.

Results:

The festival attendance was nearly double that of the first year, with 350 people participating. According to the team, Plainfield Township citizens have shown a great interest in their environment, especially water resources.

Lessons Learned:

The wellhead protection team learned that when you mix great people, communication and knowledge with available resources to reach and teach people, success will follow. The festival would not have been possible without the volunteers on the team, who really care about the environment and are committed to educating the public. The team also learned from the experiences of the first festival, identifying what did and did not work, in order to plan and implement a successful event.

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City of South Lyon
City increases community wide education efforts.

Background:

Location: City of South Lyon, Oakland County, MI

Water Supply: Ground Water, 5 production wells

Source Water Assessment: Moderately high susceptibility

Description of Project Action:

The City of South Lyon's WHP team recently completed an educational DVD to be shown on the local cable station. The DVD, entitled "South Lyon Water Working for You: Guidelines for Protecting Your Drinking Water Quality," was designed for use throughout the community. Working with the local high school's audiovisual department led to a great educational DVD and created relationships within various levels of government and the local school system.

Results:

The DVD is now finished and multiple copies have been made. It is being broadcast monthly on the local cable network and used in classes and focus groups around the community.

Lessons Learned:

The key to this successful activity was to engage motivated individuals who were willing to move ideas forward. The team brainstormed about the DVD content at their quarterly meetings, and found it very important to incorporate ideas the general public could relate to in the DVD and to collaborate with a local teacher willing to "think outside the box." This also led the team to find a creative and enthusiastic student to participate in the project. The achievement of completing this project has motivated the WHP team to feel they are accomplishing goals and not just "going through the motions."

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Greater Lansing Area
Lansing area communities form intergovernmental organization to review groundwater issues.

Background:

Location: Greater Lansing Area Communities, Ingham, Eaton, and Clinton County, MI

Water Supply: Ground Water, 100+ production wells

Source Water Assessment: Moderate to high susceptibility

The Greater Lansing, Michigan area Groundwater Management Board (GMB) serves as a voluntary forum for reviewing groundwater issues and intergovernmental cooperation opportunities. Voting members include representatives from twelve contiguous communities in the Greater Lansing area. The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission provides staff support, and receives funding from local government members to support the program. The GMB has been designated as a Groundwater Guardian community since 1995.

Description of Project Action:

The GMB provides a mechanism for several communities to work together on groundwater protection. Agendas are set to reflect priorities of the group. Tri-County Regional Planning Commission staff provided wellhead protection technical assistance to all participating municipalities.

An annual Children's Water Festival has been held since 1995, and is coordinated by Tri-County Regional Planning staff in cooperation with other area organizations.

Results:

Addressing groundwater protection issues through the GMB has led to economies of scale and more comprehensive protection initiatives. The Children's Water Festival has been very successful, attracting more than 1,500 4th and 5th grade area students each year.

Lessons Learned:

Intergovernmental coordination is important for wellhead protection. When communities know and work with each other across municipal borders, trust increases as does the opportunity for hosting successful, cooperative programs. In addition, public participation is important for viable local groundwater protection programs.

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City of Kalamazoo
City thinks “outside the box” for new groundwater education.

Background:

Location: City of Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County, MI

Water Supply: Groundwater, 102 production wells, 19 well fields.

Source Water Assessment: Moderate to high susceptibility

Description of Project Action:

Due to the knowledge and involvement of a variety of City staff and other WHP Committee members, the ability of Kalamazoo to continue with wellhead protection planning and program implementation has greatly strengthened. This collaboration has led most recently to a creative outreach program involving two area movie theaters. The WHP Committee has developed, with the help of a production company, eight 30-second movie trailer animated advertisements shown at a 10-movie theater complex. Three ads at a time are shown before the start of every movie and are replaced every few months with a new group of three. The ads are designed to engage the audience about their drinking of groundwater, the importance of protecting the source of groundwater, the threats to groundwater, and a website link to obtain more information. In addition, the WHP Committee have recently prepared three “still” ads to be included in a movie trailer at a brand new movie complex including 14 theaters scheduled to open in November 2006 in downtown Kalamazoo.

Results:

A random survey of 2,000 Kalamazoo County residents indicated that 10% of those that responded had seen at least one of the eight movie animated ads. In addition, the number of total page requests from the website www.protectyourwater.net doubled during the first month of the ads airing in the 10-theater complex. This is ample evidence that this outreach project is not only reaching but initiating interest from the general public. These ads can be viewed at the website link <http://www.digitaltalkingscreenmedia.com> under “Samples” then “Source Protection.”

Lessons Learned:

Gathering a diverse group of people leads to a creative dynamic, which in turn fuels productive, “outside the box” ideas.

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City of Davison

City works closely with area governments to form groundwater outreach efforts.

Background:

Location: City of Davison, Genesee County, MI

Water Supply: Groundwater, 5 production wells.

Source Water Assessment: Very low susceptibility

The City of Davison has a source water protection area that covers approximately 7 miles and includes three units of government. Due to this extensive area the team wanted to facilitate education efforts that would cover all stakeholders of their source water protection area. The team decided to provide information over DTV (Davison Television). The programming covered trivia questions, class room presentations and water facts. The team also decided to reach out specifically to 4th grade students in the area.

Description of Project Action:

The water department gives yearly tours to the Davison 4th grade students in order for the students to see the operations of a treatment plant as well as gain an understanding of water sources and distribution. The busing costs for the tours are covered by the Wellhead Protection grant funds. Fourth grade was the level chosen due to the fact that this year the curriculum focuses on the State of Michigan. A groundwater model presentation is done at the 7th grade science level. Each science class is visited and the importance of water, contamination and well abandonment is discussed.

Results:

These educational efforts cover approximately 700-750 students per year. The school's curriculum is followed for all water education and the efforts are evaluated yearly. One major factors contributing to the success of this program has been the continuous funding from the State of Michigan Wellhead Protection Program. This along with the interest and information from AWWA the interest and enthusiasm of the students, teachers, and administrators at Davison Community Schools has made the program a great success.

Lessons Learned:

Involving team members from Davison Community Schools and Davison Television made it easy to implement the team's education ideas. Meeting with the school Principals and Department Heads made for a quick and easy decision on the presentation approach and grade focus. The team felt an extremely important message in this educational effort was to not take natural resources for granted. A valuable lesson learned from this project is that everyone is constantly learning and anyone at any age can be educated.

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